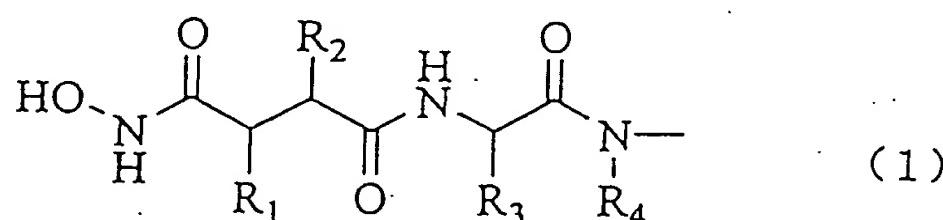


CLAIMS

1. A conjugate of (1) at least one therapeutic agent for joint diseases and (2) hyaluroic acid, a hyaluroic acid derivative or a salt thereof.
 2. The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the bond between at least one therapeutic agent for joint diseases and hyaluroic acid, a hyaluroic acid derivative or a salt thereof is a covalent bond.
 3. The conjugate of claim 1 or 2, wherein the therapeutic agent for joint diseases is a matrix metalloprotease inhibitor.
 4. The conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the matrix metalloprotease inhibitor binds to hyaluroic acid, a hyaluroic acid derivative or the salt thereof via a spacer.
 5. The conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the weight ratio of the matrix metalloprotease inhibitor to the entire conjugate is 0.01 to 50%.
 6. The conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the matrix metalloprotease inhibitor is a hydroxamic acid residue.
 7. The conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the matrix metalloprotease inhibitor is a hydroxamic acid residue represented by the general formula (1):



wherein

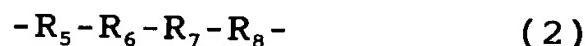
R₁ is a hydrogen atom, a hydroxyl group or a straight-chain or branched-chain alkyl group having 1 to 8 carbon atoms;

R₂ is a straight-chain or branched-chain alkyl group having 1 to 8 carbon atoms;

R₃ is a straight chain or branched alkyl group having 1 to 8 carbon atoms which may be substituted with a cycloalkyl group, an aryl group or a heterocyclic group; and

R₄ is a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group having 1 to 4 carbon atoms.

8. The conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the spacer is represented by the general formula (2):



wherein

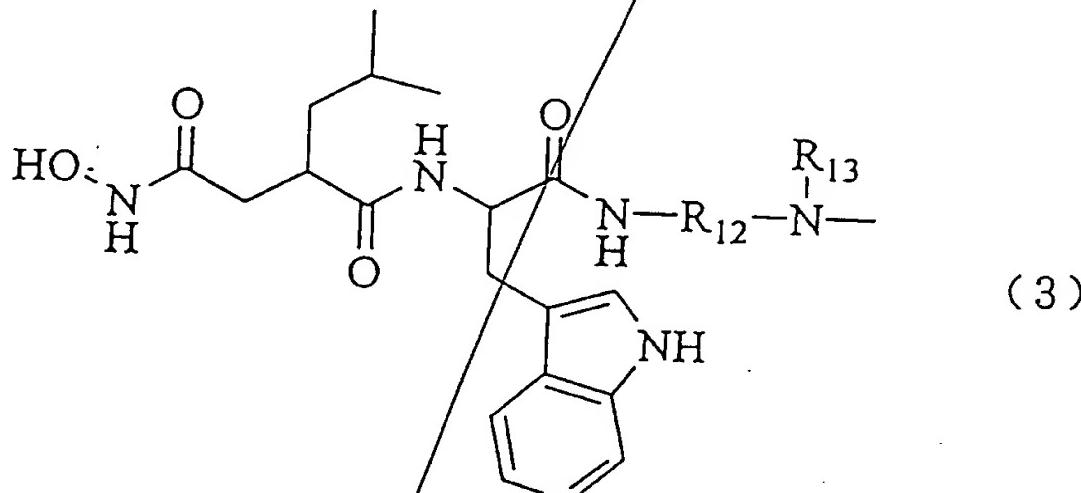
R₅ is a straight-chain or branched-chain alkylene group having 1 to 8 carbon atoms;

R₆ is an oxygen atom or a methylene or imino group which may be substituted with a straight-chain or branched-chain alkyl group having 1 to 4 carbon atoms;

R₇ is a straight-chain or branched-chain alkylene group having 1 to 10 carbon atoms into which one to three oxygen atoms may be inserted; and

R₈ is an oxygen atom, a sulfur atom or NR₉, wherein R₉ is a hydrogen atom or a straight-chain or branched-chain alkyl group having 1 to 4 carbon atoms.

f 9. The conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the conjugate of the matrix metalloprotease inhibitor and the spacer is represented by the general formula (3):



b3
wherein

R₁₂ is a straight-chain or branched-chain alkylene group having 2 to 23 carbon atoms into which one imino group and/or one to four oxygen atoms may be inserted; and

R₁₃ is a hydrogen atom or a straight-chain or branched-chain alkyl group having 1 to 4 carbon atoms.

X 10. The conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the matrix metalloprotease inhibitor in the form of a conjugate with hyaluroic acid, a hyaluroic acid derivative or a salt thereof inhibits a matrix metalloprotease *in situ*.

X 11. A method for preparing the conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 10 comprising binding a site of the therapeutic agent for joint diseases that does not affect the activity of the agent to a carboxyl group, a hydroxyl group or a

functional group at the reducing end of hyaluroic acid, a hyaluroic acid derivative or a salt thereof by direct chemical reaction or via a spacer.

12. A pharmaceutical composition comprising the conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 10.
13. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 12 which is a therapeutic agent for joint disease.
14. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 13, wherein the joint disease is osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or scapulohumeral periarthritis.
15. The use of the conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 10 in the preparation of a pharmaceutical composition.
16. The use of the conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 10 in the preparation of a therapeutic agent for joint diseases.
17. A method for treating a patient having a joint disease comprising administering a pharmaceutical composition containing a pharmaceutically effective amount of the conjugate of any one of claims 1 to 10 as the effective ingredient to the patient.

Add By 7